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AAA Minneapolis Hosts First-Ever “Project Beltway” Teen Fashion Competition on Jan. 23 to Remind Twin Cities Drivers to Buckle Up While Driving

*Twin Cities Students Set to Design and Model Original Garments
Made from 3,000 Feet of Seat Belt Webbing*

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., January 19, 2009 – AAA Minneapolis, one of Minnesota’s leading driver-safety advocacy organizations, is partnering with the Textile Center, a fabric arts organization in Minneapolis, to create “Project Beltway,” a teenage seat belt fashion competition. The event is taking place on Friday, Jan. 23 at 7:30 p.m. at the Textile Center, 3000 University Ave. S.E. in Minneapolis. AAA Minneapolis and the Textile Center have come together to use unique seat belt garments to remind Twin Cities drivers, especially teenagers, about the importance of wearing seat belts and engaging in safe driving behaviors.

Nine metro-area students, who have a vested interest in fabric arts, have been selected to design and model seat belt-clad garments in “Project Beltway.” The garments are being made out of 3,000 feet of black, beige and red seat belt webbing donated from TAKATA, the seat belt vendor for Ford Motors. A few of the participating students include:

- **Joshua Homic, age 14:** likes creating dramatic, elegant and cutting edge art.
- **Katy Enright, age 16:** likes how art and fashion reflect personality.
- **Kia Lena Arendt, age 16:** loves the freedom to express herself through art and that “Project Beltway” is about an important issue like seat belt safety.

All of the students will receive gift bags from AAA Minneapolis and at least \$20 gift cards from Associated Sewing fabric store in St. Paul. The grand prize recipient will win a new sewing machine worth \$300 plus a \$100 gift card from Associated Sewing. The second- and third-place finishers will receive \$80 and \$60 gift cards, respectively, from Associated Sewing, which also has stores in Bloomington and St. Cloud.

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Juli Jay, the FOX-9 TV Morning News traffic reporter who daily gives updates on road conditions, traffic congestion and accident occurrences is set to emcee “Project Beltway.” Judges for the competition include Mall of America Trend Specialist, Sara Rogers, KARE-11 TV Reporter Rena Sarigianopoulos, mnfashion.org Creator Anna Lee and Rep. Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park), who has co-authored primary seat belt legislation in current and past Minnesotan congressional sessions.

“AAA Minneapolis is excited to be working with the Textile Center on ‘Project Beltway’ to stress the importance of seat belt safety in a fun and creative way,” said Jennifer Brownlee, AAA Minneapolis spokesperson. “According to a 2008 survey that AAA Minneapolis conducted, 77 percent of Twin Cities drivers, ages 18-34, admitted they are distracted while they drive, so we feel it’s our responsibility to remind all community members, especially young drivers, to fasten their seat belts and focus when behind the wheel.”

“Project Beltway” is part of a 2009 AAA Minneapolis advocacy program called *Fasten & Focus* that involves high school and college events including distracted driving demonstrations, speakers, a dedicated Web site, social media and marketing outreach.

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AAA Minneapolis

AAA Minneapolis, based in St. Louis Park, is a full-service automotive, travel, insurance, financial and community services organization, serving nearly 185,000 members in the Hennepin County area. To learn more about AAA Minneapolis, click on www.aaa.com.

Textile Center

The Textile Center, located in the Prospect Park neighborhood of Minneapolis, is a national center for fiber art. Its mission is to honor textile traditions and promote excellence and innovation in fiber art. The Textile Center represents and supports fiber artists working in all forms of textile media, including weaving, quilting, knitting, sewing, needlework, lace making, basketry and beading. For more information on the Textile Center, go to www.textilecentermn.org.